

Sovereignty is a step in the wrong direction

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — I had the privilege of living and working in Hawaii in the 1970s. Upon my return visit, I was disappointed to find that not only have the ethnic divisions on the islands not improved, they threaten to become even worse with the assertion of "Hawaiian national sovereignty."

Take it from the planning director of a state that has just seen riots in Los Angeles pit one ethnic group against another. Don't do it. It's a step in the wrong direction.

If you spend enough time telling people they are entitled, they will come to believe it. And if people believe themselves victims, they will be. On the mainland, a whole generation of inner city youth has been reinforced by 1980s liberal thought in a sense of entitlement and grievance.

As a result, they blame others, take no responsibility for themselves, and justify lawless behavior.

Are you about to repeat the same error in Hawaii? I hope not. It would be a mistake of misplaced sympathy, and a cause of long-term social divisiveness, to take any attitude toward native Hawaiians other than that they should be treated precisely the same as everyone else, no better and no worse.

The whole notion of Hawaiian "national sovereignty" is simply an at-



**VIEW
POINT**
By Richard
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tempt to rewrite history. First of all, Hawaiians have no particular claim to be any more "native" than anyone else. Polynesian settlers, doing precisely what Europeans and Asians would later do as well, arrived in the Hawaiian Islands between 1200 and 1400 A.D.

That is not "native" by anyone's historical standards. The chronological accident of a few centuries does not change the fact that everyone coming to these islands has come from somewhere else.

Second, what difference does it make, anyway? People deserve to be treated as individuals. The whole notion of group rights is what the world has been fighting against in South Africa, and what has torn places like Lebanon and Yugoslavia apart. You are not entitled to special treatment because of something that happened to your ancestors. You and I are entitled to be treated alike.

Third, let's put to an end once and for all this romantic nonsense about a lost island culture. Superficial charm is great for the tourist industry, but the reality is that Polynesian culture was violent and primitive. Ancient Hawaiians were a bronze age people who practiced human sacrifice. That is not a higher spirituality, but lesser civilization.

The Polynesian culture in Hawaii was displaced by a more advanced society, a society sufficiently more humane (unlike the ancient Hawaiians, in fact) that it did not seek to exterminate the defeated, but instead continued to offer them a place in society.

The integration of Hawaii into the modern world was inevitable, was a step forward for humanity, and was a good thing. Haoles and subsequently Asians have built a much better Hawaii — for everyone. They have brought the rights of the individual, the rule of law, equal opportunity and respect for women, to say nothing of a written alphabet and life expectancy past 40.

Unless you like a rigid class system, strict kapus, pagan religion, and frequent violent death, how can anyone deny that Western civilization has brought a substantially greater number of people in Hawaii a substantially better life?

These are unpleasant thoughts for

people who like to feel themselves victims. Perhaps more to the point, they are "politically incorrect" in an age dominated by liberal dogma. But they are nonetheless true.

Those who persist in sympathy for a gentler past that never existed do Hawaiians no favors by indulging their childish posturing to reverse history. The million or so other residents of Hawaii, and a similar number of tourists annually, are not going away.

If Hawaiians are serious about working on their real problems — higher rates of substance abuse, lack of education, higher disease and mortality rates — they will assimilate into a larger, color-blind society and take advantage of the equal opportunities that now exist (if not greater; look at the net worth of the Bishop Estate).

"National sovereignty" may be temporarily satisfying to native Hawaiians as a proud reassertion of their identity, but it will do nothing to improve their lives. Instead, it will drive them further apart from mainstream society and help to create a permanent underclass of societal losers. Who would wish that on anyone?

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